



Aruba's ONLY English newspaper

U.S. extends mask rule for travel while weighing new approach

By DAVID KOENIG and ZEKE MILLER

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal officials are extending the requirement for masks on planes and public transportation for one more month — through mid-April — while taking steps that could lead to lifting the rule.

The mask mandate was scheduled to expire March 18, but the Transportation Security Administration said Thursday that it will extend the requirement through April 18.

TSA said the extra month will give the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention time to develop new, more targeted policies that will consider the number of cases of COVID-19 nationally and in local communities, and the risk of new variants.

The TSA enforces the rule, which extends to planes, buses, trains and transit hubs.

As of March 3, more than 90% of the U.S. population lived in areas with low or medium COVID-19 case levels, meaning that the CDC no longer recommends face masks in public indoor settings.



Patrick Foye, Chairman and CEO of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, hands out face masks on a New York City subway, , Nov. 17, 2020, in New York.

Continued on Page 2

Associated Press

The St. Regis Bermuda Resort The Ritz-Carlton, Turks & Caicos

WIN LUXURY VACATIONS

FEBRUARY - APRIL 2022

ONE (1) COMPLIMENTARY TICKET


WITH YOUR DINNER PURCHASE AT BLT STEAK OR CASA NONNA NEW YORK OR RECEIVE ONE (1) RAFFLE TICKET FOR EVERY 80 POINTS ON SLOT MACHINES/\$40 THEORETICAL WIN ON TABLE GAMES.



THE CASINO AT
THE RITZ-CARLTON
ARUBA




Must be over the age of 18 years. The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba encourages responsible gaming. SCAN TO LEARN MORE



COVID TESTING MADE EASY! At the Paseo Herencia Mall

LOCATION
Paseo Herencia Mall next to TGIF


ANTIGEN
Approved for re-entry to the U.S.


ANTIGEN \$35
Same day results

PCR \$75
Next day results

VERY gentle swabbers

JUST WALK IN!
No appointment needed.





OPEN DAILY FROM 9AM - 9PM

Craving a Good Steak?



El Gaucho
ARGENTINE GRILL

One pound of Natural grass-Fed Beef from the Argentinean Pampas. Grilled to perfection by our Master Chefs over a real Charcoal Fire... Juicy, Lean and full of Flavor.

It's Time for an extraordinary steak!

Closed on Mondays

Open Tuesday through Sunday from 11.30 am till 11 pm. For Reservations call 582-3677
Lunch and Early Bird specials available till 5pm.

U.S. extends mask rule for travel while weighing new approach

Continued from Front

A decision to eventually scrap the mask requirement — one of the last vestiges of nationwide pandemic rules — has grown more likely in recent weeks as more states, even those led by Democratic governors, relaxed their own mandates for wearing masks indoors, and the CDC eased its recommendations.

That led critics to question why the CDC would allow maskless people to gather in movie theaters and sports arenas but not on planes.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said Thursday that deciding on the right policy for travel was more complicated than setting recommendations for local communities.

"If you're moving from one zone to another and picking people up ... it's a little bit different, and that requires some consultation, which is what (CDC officials) are going to endeavor to do between now and April 18," Psaki said.

CDC Director Dr. Rochelle Walensky said last week that her agency must study the science around virus transmission "but also the epidemiology and the frequency that we may encounter a variant of concern or a variant of interest in our travel corridors."

Dr. Graham Snyder, medical director of infection prevention at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, said it makes sense to be more cautious on planes, subway trains and buses because "they are designed to efficiently put a lot of people in one place," raising the risk of virus transmission.

Stephen Morse, an infectious-diseases expert at Columbia University, said a short-term extension of the rule is appropriate, but he warned that once it is dropped it will be hard to revive if COVID-19 cases surge again. He said there have been so many surprises with the pandemic that "a month may not be long enough."

The federal mask mandate



Commuters wear face masks and social distance while riding an M Train, Tuesday, March 9, 2021, in New York's subway system.

Associated Press

was imposed in January 2021, days after President Joe Biden took office, and has been extended several times. The Trump administration had declined to require masks on public transportation, but airlines began requiring them in mid-2020 to reassure passengers worried about contracting the virus.

Last September, the Transportation Security Administration doubled the fines for people who refused to wear a mask on public transportation to up to \$1,000 for first-time offenders and up to \$3,000 for repeat violations.

The requirement became a lightning rod for confrontation between some passengers and airline crews. Since the start of 2021, airlines have reported more than 6,000 incidents of unruly passengers, most of them involving disputes over mask wearing. That history could make it unlikely for airlines to require

masks once the federal rule lapses.

"I don't think the airlines have any desire to impose their own requirements at this point against a public that is weary of these restrictions," said Henry Harteveldt, a travel-industry analyst with Atmosphere Research Group.

On four flights he took this week, Harteveldt said, "I noticed there were passengers who did not wear their masks even when they were not eating or drinking, and the flight attendants did not ask them to put them on." Flight attendants were once mostly in favor of masks, which they viewed as protecting their health. They largely supported the federal rule, which carried more weight than an airline policy.

But cabin crews are now divided over keeping the federal rule, according to their largest union, the Association of Flight Attendants, which declined to

take a position on extending the mandate beyond March 18.

The continuation of the rule seemed to underscore the position of airlines and aircraft manufacturers, who have argued since the start of the pandemic that high-quality filters and strong air flow made virus transmission unlikely in plane cabins. In December, as omicron was spreading rapidly, the CEO of Southwest Airlines told Congress that masks "don't add much, if anything" to safety on planes — a claim that experts quickly disputed.

David Neeleman, who founded JetBlue and now leads another start-up carrier, Breeze Airways, said passengers "who feel uncomfortable should wear a good mask, an N95 mask," but face coverings shouldn't be mandatory.

"I would love to see it expire on (March) 18th," Neeleman told The Associated Press. "It puts a lot of stress

on our flight crews, and it puts stress on our passengers."

Shannon Schreyer of Ogden, Utah, wants the mandate killed.

"I haven't seen that it has provided any measure of effectiveness," he said, his mask hanging just below his mouth while picking up luggage at Detroit Metro Airport. "I think that the masks have been a pretty big facade from the very beginning. We're pretty much over the whole COVID thing."

Some travelers are just perplexed by all the fuss over wearing masks.

"I don't really mind, honestly — on bus, on train, on plane," said Natalie Johnston, a University of Michigan student from Philadelphia, who was waiting for a bus in Ann Arbor, Michigan. "I don't really think it's that big of a deal."

News of the extension and policy review was first reported by Reuters. □

U.S. misjudged Ukraine's will to fight Russia, officials admit

By **NOMAAN MERCHANT**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

Top U.S. intelligence officials admitted Thursday that they underestimated Ukraine's ability to defend itself against Russia's invasion, a mistake for intelligence agencies that have otherwise been lauded for accurately predicting Russian President Vladimir Putin's intention to launch a war.

"My view was that, based on a variety of factors, that the Ukrainians were not as ready as I thought they should be," said Lt. Gen. Scott Berrier, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. "Therefore, I questioned their will to fight. That was a bad assessment on my part because they have fought bravely and honorably and are doing the right thing."

The White House has faced Republican criticism that it isn't providing enough weapons or intelligence to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The Biden administration is currently opposed to a Polish plan to donate old Russian-made warplanes to Ukraine, out of concern that Putin may view that as an escalation by the U.S. or NATO.

Berrier testified alongside other top officials before the Senate Intelligence Committee. Generally, U.S. intelligence agencies have won praise from lawmakers of both political parties for their handling of the crisis. Much of the hearing focused on the unprecedented-



Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Mark Warner, D-Va., left, greets Defense Intelligence Agency Director Lt. Gen. Scott Berrier, right, at the start of a hearing on worldwide threats as Russia continues to attack Ukraine, at the Capitol in Washington, Thursday, March 10, 2022.

Associated Press

ed U.S. campaign to declassify intelligence about alleged attempts by Russia to create a fake pretext for its invasion. Even though Putin ordered the invasion anyway, lawmakers say the campaign helped develop support for sanctions that have crippled Russia's economy and pushed previously reluctant Western countries to give military aid to Ukraine.

Two weeks into its invasion, Russia has failed to win control of Ukraine's airspace or subdue the capital of Kyiv or other major cities. But the war has had devastating consequences already: An airstrike hitting a maternity hospital, attacks on nuclear plants, and more than 2

million refugees having already fled the country with accounts of possible war crimes.

There's no sign Putin intends to de-escalate. Russian propaganda outlets in recent days have promoted false theories that the U.S. and Ukraine are developing chemical weapons. The White House in turn has warned Russia is setting the pretext for its own chemical or biological attack.

Berrier, who leads the Pentagon's primary intelligence arm, said at Thursday's hearing that just as Putin appeared to have misjudged his army's ability to subdue Ukraine's much smaller armed forces, so did the U.S.

"We made some assumptions about his assumptions, which proved to be very, very flawed," said Berrier. "I think assessing will, morale, and a will to fight is a very difficult analytical task. We had different inputs from different organizations and we — at least from my perspective as the director — I did not do as well as I could have."

Berrier's admission follows another misjudgment in Afghanistan, whose U.S.-backed government collapsed far more quickly to the Taliban than Washington expected. Officials believed the Afghan forces — long trained and funded by the U.S. — could hold out for potentially months

after the American withdrawal. Instead, lacking U.S. air power and intelligence support, Afghan forces gave up many cities without a fight last summer. Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines said that Putin had underestimated the resistance he would face from the Ukrainians. But Haines added: "We did not do as well in terms of predicting the military challenges that he has encountered with his own military."

Sen. Tom Cotton, an Arkansas Republican who questioned Berrier and Haines, noted that assessing a foreign military's will to fight was particularly difficult.

"But these mistakes had potentially real-world policy implications about the willingness of the president or other NATO leaders to provide weapons that they thought might have fallen into the hands of Russians in a matter of hours," he said. Cotton and several other Republicans on the intelligence committee criticized the Biden administration's current refusal to support a Polish plan to donate Russian-made warplanes to Ukraine. Biden administration officials have warned that Putin might view that as an escalation of the conflict. They say planes would go beyond the weapons the Pentagon and Western allies have already given Ukraine, including anti-tank systems and surface-to-air missiles to shoot down Russian aircraft. □

Alaska North Slope natural gas leak is under investigation

By **BECKY BOHRER**

Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — Authorities are investigating a natural gas leak detected last week at a ConocoPhillips Alaska oil drill site on Alaska's North Slope, officials said.

Grace Salazar, a special assistant with the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, said Wednesday that the commission that

oversees oil and gas drilling in the state is investigating the matter.

The leak was detected early last Friday, according to a statement from ConocoPhillips, which said that "out of an abundance of caution" Monday it took steps to relocate non-essential personnel from the area because of what it described as a subsurface gas release at the drill site.

The company, in a statement dated Tuesday and provided to The Associated Press on Wednesday by spokesperson Michael Walter, said there were "no reports of injury or environmental impact to the tundra or wildlife.

Air quality continues to be monitored, and no natural gas has been detected outside of the CD1 pad." The company described the



This Feb. 9, 2016, file photo shows an ice-covered ConocoPhillips sign at a drilling site in Nuiqsut, Alaska.

Associated Press

gas leak as being below the surface of the ground and said the cause was under investigation.

It said it did not have an estimate on the volume of gas

that was released.

Walter, in response to additional questions, said the company had no additional information to disclose. □

Virginia lawmakers OK lifting ban on facial technology use

By DENISE LAVOIE

Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Last year, Virginia lawmakers passed one of the most restrictive bans in the country on the use of facial recognition technology, barring local police departments and campus police from purchasing or using the technology unless explicitly authorized by the legislature.

On Thursday, just eight months after the measure took effect, lawmakers approved a bill to lift the blanket ban. The legislation would allow police agencies to use the technology in certain circumstances, including to help identify an individual when they have reasonable suspicion that the person committed a crime. Under the bill, facial recognition also could be used for a variety of other uses, including to help identify crime victims or witnesses, sex trafficking victims and unidentified bodies in morgues.

The legislation explicitly bars the use of facial recognition for surveillance or monitoring. Cities and states around the country moved to limit its use after some law enforcement agencies applied facial recognition technology to images taken from street cameras during racial jus-



Virginia State Sen. Ryan McDougle, R-Hanover, listens to debate during the Senate session at the Capitol Thursday March 10, 2022, in Richmond, Va.

Associated Press

tice demonstrations in 2021 and used those to make arrests in some cases.

Several lawmakers said they viewed the ban passed last year as a temporary measure to allow the legislature to evaluate facial recognition technology. Democratic Sen. Scott Surovell, whose bill was approved Thursday, said the technology — when used with appropriate restrictions — can be an important investigatory tool for police.

“I think it will help police not only solve, but prosecute

crime more efficiently,” said Surovell.

Some lawmakers were vehemently opposed to ending the ban, citing concerns about privacy, civil rights violations and studies that found higher error rates for facial recognition software used to identify people of color.

“This technology can be very important to law enforcement for different types of investigatory situations, but it can also be used for a tremendous amount of bad things ... is dangerous,” said Repub-

lican Sen. Ryan McDougle. “It is not right, it is not as restrictive as it should be,” he said.

Democratic Del. Marcia “Cia” Price cited the case of Robert Williams, a Black man who was arrested by Detroit police when facial recognition technology mistakenly identified him as a shoplifting suspect. Williams said his Michigan driver’s license photo — kept in a statewide image repository — was incorrectly flagged as a likely match to the suspect. Investigators had scanned grainy surveil-

lance camera footage of a 2018 theft inside a watch store.

“When he said he didn’t do it, the officer said, ‘Well, the computer said you did,’ ” Price said.

“Why should we allow law enforcement to use it?” she said.

The ban applied to local and campus police departments, but not to Virginia State Police. State police use the Centralized Criminal Image System, which allows them to compare an unknown image of a person to a database of mug shots of people who have been arrested. The software returns images that have a similarity to the subject in question, but police investigators are required to confirm the official identification.

Several lawmakers said the new legislation includes “guardrails” to ensure that police have to follow clear rules on when and how the technology can be used. Republican Del. Glenn Davis said police already routinely use publicly available photos on social media sites during investigations.

“All we’re doing here is instead of having law enforcement officers sit there and look through hundreds of photos to try to make that match, we use this technology,” Davis said. □



Dried hemp plants are sorted and trimmed at Hepworth Farms in Milton, N.Y., Monday, April 12, 2021.

Associated Press

By MARINA VILLENEUVE

Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — The first licenses to sell recreational marijuana in New York will go to people who

were casualties of the war on drugs, state officials said Wednesday.

People with marijuana-related convictions will get dibs on the first 100 to 200

1st NY pot sales permits will go to people with convictions

retail cannabis licenses awarded by the state in an effort to redress the inequities of a justice system that locked up a disproportionate number of people of color for drug crimes.

Some licenses will go to nonprofits or businesses who have a leader linked to a marijuana conviction. Priority also will be given to people with a parent, legal guardian, child or spouse convicted of a marijuana-related offense.

Gov. Kathy Hochul, a Democrat, is set to announce the planned regulations for “social equity” applicants Thursday.

The regulations will get the green light from the state cannabis control board later that day, said Office of Cannabis Management spokesperson Freeman Klopott.

Convictions must have occurred before March 31, 2021, when the state’s legalization bill was signed by former Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

The plans were first reported by The New York Times. The regulations were posted on the state’s website Wednesday.

It’s unclear how many retail licenses will be issued in New York, the second-most

populous state after California to legalize possession and use of marijuana for adults over age 21.

Social equity emerged as a key theme in marijuana legalization in recent years. States where marijuana is legal have increasingly tried in recent years to ensure there’s a place in the market for people who were prosecuted because of a now-allowed drug. But the efforts have been slow-moving in many states.

New York “is taking a big swing,” said Cassandra Frederique, the executive director of the pro-legalization Drug Policy Alliance. □

EU united on Ukraine, but won't offer fast-track membership

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN
and SYLVIE CORBET

Associated Press

VERSAILLES, France (AP) —

European Union leaders meeting in France Thursday ruled out fulfilling Ukraine's demand for a fast-track integration with the bloc, as they discussed ways to help the eastern country that's been invaded by neighboring Russia.

EU nations have been fully united in backing Ukraine's resistance, adopting unprecedented economic sanctions against Russia, but leaders are divided on how fast Brussels could move to accept Ukraine as a member, and how swiftly the 27-nation bloc could sever energy ties with Moscow.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wants his country to quickly join the EU, but an agreement on that point won't be achieved this week during the two-day summit hosted in the palace of Versailles west of Paris.

At best, EU leaders are expected to agree on language supportive of the Ukrainian bid to join the European family, but they will stop short of going further into the process.



European Union leaders pose for a group photo at an EU summit at the Chateau de Versailles, in Versailles, west of Paris, Thursday, March 10, 2022.

Associated Press

The Ukrainian fast-track bid has received warm support in Eastern European countries, but EU officials have stressed the process could take years, with unanimity among current members required to allow a newcomer in the club.

French President Emmanuel Macron said the EU must send a "strong signal" of support for Ukraine, but ruled out the possibility for the country to join the bloc any time soon.

"Can we open today a procedure of accession (to the EU) with a country at war? I don't think so," Macron said.

"Shall we close the door and say (to Ukraine): 'Never?' That would be unfair." Upon his arrival at Versailles, Dutch Prime minister Mark Rutte said he told Zelenskyy that Ukraine's EU accession can't be sped up.

"There isn't something like a fast track, a fast procedure," Rutte said.

"We also have to take the Western Balkan nations into account, who sometimes have been working for over a decade to become merely a candidate nation for membership. Think of Albania and Macedonia. Let's see what we can do in a practical sense."

Another key deterrent to a hasty decision which Macron alluded to is the specific EU treaty clause that if a member falls victim to armed aggression, the

other EU countries have an obligation to aid and assist it by all the means in their power.

But specifically the Baltic nations, with their Soviet past, want to reach out to Ukraine.

"It's also important to show a clear open door for EU membership for Ukraine, that the path is open for them to take and that we as a family of democratic nations would want them," said Latvian Prime Minister Krisjanis Karins. "That's very, very important for the Ukrainians right now as a very important signal."

Leaders' talks will also focus on how to wean the bloc off its Russian energy dependency and bolster the region's defense capabilities. Possible new sanctions against Russia and its ally Belarus including cutting all their banks from the SWIFT dominant system for global financial transactions will also be on the table.

"The energy sector is the Kremlin's main source of income, some 600 million euros a day," Karins said. "If we were to stop the purchase of Russian energy, that would stop the funding of the Russian military machine." □

ASEAN members say summit with U.S. is being rescheduled

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) —

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is seeking to reschedule a summit meeting of its leaders with U.S. President Joe Biden, Cambodian and

Indonesian officials said Thursday.

Cambodian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Chum Sounry explained in a statement sent Thursday that the proposed March 28-29

dates "were not convenient for our leaders due to their respective heavy agenda." Cambodia is this year's chair of the regional grouping, known as ASEAN. The dates, which had been proposed by the U.S. for the special summit in Washington, would not allow all heads of government to attend, Indonesian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Teuku Faizasyah said Thursday in the Indonesian capital Jakarta.

He said that Indonesia, as coordinator for ASEAN with the United States, is still seeking a suitable date for all parties.

The White House last month had announced the March 28-29 summit as an opportunity to demonstrate the U.S. commitment to the

bloc and a chance to mark 45 years of U.S.-ASEAN relations. There was no immediate comment from Washington to the postponement announcements.

ASEAN's 10 members are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Its members have been at odds with each other over the crisis in Myanmar, which has been wracked by violent unrest since the army ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February last year.

ASEAN is seeking to implement a five-point plan for Myanmar it reached last year stressing dialogue, humanitarian assistance and an end to violence. But

the ruling military council of Myanmar has delayed the plan's implementation even as the country has slipped into a situation that some U.N. experts have described as civil war.

Myanmar's lack of cooperation led ASEAN last year to bar its leader, Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, from attending its annual summit meeting, an unprecedented step for the body. It has applied a similar policy for subsequent meetings, saying that it would allow Myanmar to send only non-political representatives.

The deadlock over Myanmar is almost unprecedented for the grouping, whose members have traditionally avoided public criticism of each other and operated by consensus. □



Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn holds a press conference after the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) session of ASEAN foreign ministers' retreat in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022.

Associated Press

Trump-era Israeli settlement growth proceeds in his absence

By **JOSEPH KRAUSS**

Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The growth of Israel's West Bank settler population accelerated last year, according to figures released by a pro-settler group on Thursday, despite renewed American pressure to rein in construction on occupied territory that the Palestinians want for a future state.

The figures show that a settlement surge initiated when President Donald Trump was in office shows no sign of slowing down. Trump provided unprecedented support for Israel's claims to land seized in war, reversing decades of U.S. policy.

President Joe Biden's administration has returned to the previous approach, criticizing settlement expansion as an obstacle to resolving the conflict. But Israel has continued to build and expand settlements, and major road projects are expected to bring even more settlers into the territory.

The statistics, compiled by WestBankJewishPopulationStats.com and based on official figures, show the settler population grew to 490,493 as of Jan. 30, a nearly 3.2% rise over 13



A general view shows the West Bank Jewish settlement of Efrat, Thursday, March 10, 2022.

Associated Press

months. The population has risen by 16.5% since the group began compiling statistics in 2017, it says.

Israel's overall annual growth rate, by comparison, is around 1.7%. In 2020, the last year of the Trump administration, which also saw repeated coronavirus lockdowns, the settler population in the West Bank grew by 2.6%, according to the group. "There's a tremendous amount of construction going on," said

its CEO, Baruch Gordon, including in his community of Beit El, just outside the West Bank city of Ramallah, where the Palestinian Authority is headquartered. "Right now there's 350 units going up that will probably be finished within a year, year and a half. So when that hits, that's going to increase the size of our town by about 25%," he said.

The settler population tends to be younger and more religious, with a higher aver-

age birth rate. Many Israelis are drawn to the state-subsidized settlements for the quality of life.

They resemble suburbs or small towns and offer lower housing prices than Israel's crowded and increasingly unaffordable cities. The pandemic might have made the settlements even more attractive.

"Just like in America, people moved out of Manhattan and went to suburbs and found that they could

live in more open spaces, and the same is happening in Israel," Gordon said.

His figures do not include east Jerusalem, which Israel annexed in a move not recognized internationally, and which is now home to more than 200,000 Jewish settlers. The West Bank and east Jerusalem are together home to some 3 million Palestinians.

Israel captured both territories, along with Gaza, in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians view the growth of settlements as the main obstacle to peace because they cut off Palestinian communities from their land and from one another, and make it nearly impossible to create a viable state. Settlements have expanded under every Israeli government, even at the height of the peace process in the 1990s.

There have been no serious peace negotiations in over a decade, and Israel's current prime minister, Naftali Bennett, is a former settler leader opposed to Palestinian statehood.

Israel's political system is dominated by pro-settler parties that view the West Bank as the biblical and historical heartland of the Jewish people. □

On appeal, U.N.-backed court convicts 2 in Hariri killing

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Appeals judges at a United Nations-backed tribunal on Thursday overturned the acquittals of two members of Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group in the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

The five-judge appeals panel at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon convicted Hassan Habib Merhi and Hussein Hassan Oneissi of five charges linked to the assassination, including conspiracy to commit a terrorist act and being accomplices to intentional homicide.

The unanimous appeals decision said that judges in the original trial verdict "committed errors of law

invalidating the Judgment and errors of fact occasioning a miscarriage of justice," the tribunal said in a statement.

Merhi and Oneissi were

originally cleared in August 2020 of involvement in the assassination outside a seaside hotel in Beirut. A third Hezbollah member, Salim Ayyash, was convicted at



Rescue workers and soldiers stand around a massive crater after a bomb attack that tore through the motorcade of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in Beirut, Lebanon, Feb. 14, 2005.

Associated Press

the time as a co-conspirator on five charges linked to his involvement in the 2005 suicide truck bombing that killed Hariri and 21 others and wounded 226 people. Prosecutors said Merhi and Oneissi played "a significant role" in the plot by distributing a video with a false claim of responsibility after the bombing.

"The acts for which they have been convicted were callous and manipulative, designed not only to shield the real perpetrators from justice but to deceive the Lebanese people," Prosecutor Norman Farrell said in a statement.

All the suspects were tried in their absence as they were never arrested. The court said Merhi and One-

issi will be sentenced at a later date and issued fresh arrest warrants for both men following Thursday's convictions.

Farrell said "accountability does not end with their conviction. Merhi and Oneissi, along with their co-conspirator Salim Ayyash remain fugitives. Justice demands that they be arrested."

The tribunal's 2020 verdict was met with anger and disappointment in parts of Lebanon after judges said there was no evidence that Hezbollah's leadership and Syria were involved in the attack, despite saying the assassination happened as Hariri and his political allies were discussing calling for Syria to withdraw its forces from Lebanon. □

Ex-Honduran national police chief wanted in U.S. arrested

By **MARLON GONZÁLEZ** and
CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN
Associated Press

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras (AP) — A former head of Honduras' national police who was sought by U.S. prosecutors on drug and weapons charges was arrested Wednesday, according to the government. Juan Carlos Bonilla Valladares served as the country's top police official in 2012 and 2013. Better known as "El Tigre," or "The Tiger," Bonilla faced allegations of human rights abuses during his time in command.

Security Minister Ramón Sabillón confirmed Bonilla's arrest Wednesday afternoon at a toll plaza on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa.

A high-ranking police official, who requested anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the arrest, said Bonilla had been under surveillance by a police intelligence unit. The official said the arrest came in response to a U.S. extradition request.

The United States requested Bonilla's arrest and extradition in May of last year on drug and weapons charges. Prosecutors labeled him a co-conspirator of former President Juan Orlando Hernández and the president's brother



Honduras Police Chief Gen. Juan Carlos Bonilla Valladares, also known as the Tiger, or "El Tigre," salutes during an event in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Dec. 21, 2012.

Associated Press

Tony Hernández. The case has developed over years in the Southern District of New York.

A spokeswoman from the U.S. Attorney's Office declined to comment.

Former President Hernández is currently awaiting a determination of a Honduras judge on a U.S. extradition request also from the Southern District of New York on drug trafficking and weapons charges.

U.S. prosecutors in Manhattan announced charges against Bonilla in April 2020,

alleging that he used his law enforcement clout to protect U.S.-bound shipments of cocaine. Bonilla denied at the time being a drug trafficker.

He said then he would go wherever necessary to prove the accusations untrue and suggested drug traffickers were behind the accusations. He held up his long cooperation with the U.S. State Department as proof he was someone the U.S. government trusted.

Then Manhattan U.S. Attorney Geoffrey S. Berman

said at the time that Bonilla played a key role in a violent international drug conspiracy, working on behalf of former Honduran Congressman Tony Hernández Alvarado and his brother, Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández.

"Bonilla Valladares oversaw the transshipment of multi-ton loads of cocaine bound for the U.S., used machine guns and other weaponry to accomplish that, and participated in extreme violence, including the murder of a rival

trafficker," Berman said in a statement in 2020.

Bonilla was named head of Honduras' National Police in May 2012 by President Porfirio Lobo, through December 2013. He was removed when Hernández took over as president.

Prosecutors have said Bonilla let drug shipments pass through police checkpoints without inspection and gave drug organizations information about police aerial and maritime interdiction operations so they could evade them.

An internal police report in Honduras once accused Bonilla of leading death squads and participating in three killings or forced disappearances between 1998 and 2002. He was prosecuted for one murder but was acquitted in 2004.

Late Wednesday, Bonilla, like the former president, was led before cameras shackled at the wrists and ankles. He wore a black track suit and baseball cap.

He was to spend the night in the same National Police special forces base where Hernández is being held. Bonilla was scheduled to make an initial appearance in the Supreme Court of Justice on Thursday to have the charges read to him. □

US tells China: Give UN rights chief wide access in Xinjiang

GENEVA (AP) — The United States called on China's government Wednesday to grant "unhindered and unsupervised access" to the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, when she visits China and its western Xinjiang region in May.

Ambassador Sheba Crocker, the U.S. permanent representative to U.N. institutions in Geneva, said any interference in the work of Bachelet's team would support "propaganda" that denies alleged rights abuses against members of the Muslim Uyghur minority in Xinjiang and others. Crocker said a credible visit

by the U.N. human rights chief and her team should involve access to "the locations where atrocities and human rights violations and abuses" have been reported.

"We call upon the People's Republic of China to ensure that her visit is accorded unhindered and unsupervised access to all areas of Xinjiang and to private meetings with a diverse range of Uyghur individuals and civil society groups," Crocker said in a statement.

"Any access limitations imposed on the high commissioner or her office, or interference with their activities

or reporting, would severely undermine the credibility of her visit and support the propaganda that denies the abuses occurring in Xinjiang," she added.

Crocker, who took up the post in mid-January, also called on Bachelet to release a long-awaited and much delayed report from her office on Xinjiang.

Numerous human rights groups and advocacy organizations have chronicled or spoken out about allegations of rights abuses against Uyghurs and others in the region, but the report from Bachelet's office would come with the imprimatur of the United



Michelle Bachelet, U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, speaks to the media about the Tigray region of Ethiopia during a press conference at the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, Nov. 3, 2021.

Associated Press

Nations.

Diplomats in Geneva have said the report has been ready — or very close to it — for months. Bachelet's office has not specified

when it plans to release the report or whether her visit to China, announced Tuesday, would have any bearing on the timing of its publication. □

Fit2fly COVID-19 Testing Center
NO APPOINTMENT NEEDED!

NAAT (Abott ID):
Result in 30 minutes!
PCR / Antigen Test
SAME DAY RESULT!

LABORATORIO
DI SERVICIO  **MedCare Clinic**
URGENT CARE
Tel: (+297) 280-0630
info@medcare.aw / www.medcare.aw

Locations: **The Cove Mall (8:00 AM - 6:00 PM)** **Medcare near Courtyard by Marriott (8:00 AM - 2:00 PM)**

Get it ALL done at Do It Center and Super Do It Center & Groceries

Noord – Sometimes all we need is one place where we can do all our shopping at once. Well, Do it center and Super Do it Center Groceries has it all. This is the largest, local owned Do it Center in the Caribbean and best of all a 100% locally owned family business.

How it all began

It was 1938 when Mr. Eric Ponson started his journey at General Store. Ponson did not hesitate and decided to buy General Store. Buying a store and thus going from employee to owner of a business with a debt of 11,000 guilders was not an easy task.

As the saying goes: "Be-

hind every successful man, is a strong woman". In the case of Ponson, this was no different. As General Store progressed and slowly became successful, Mrs. Irene Ponson, came in to assist her husband. Irene Ponson is a visionary, she knew exactly where and how to invest and within a short amount of time in 1970, General Store moved to a better location at the Steenweg. This allowed for a lot more merchandize, products and employees. Supply and demand was as such, that General Store became the number 1 electrical business. The place where you went to find bulbs, cables, outlets or any other electrical equipment you needed. Business

kept going so well that the location at the Steenweg became too small and was moved later to Dakota Shopping Paradise and later to Pedro Gallego Straat. With this move, an expansion was decided upon and an electronics store in Savaneta was opened. General Store still being very successful was ready for more growth.

Ricky, Kenneth, Corine and Frans are the fruits of this marriage. They worked at their parent's side every day until they were ready to go abroad to study. In was in their backyard that all containers were stalled. This is why all four children know everything there is to know about the business.



BINGO IS BACK EVERY THURSDAY, SATURDAY & SUNDAY!

50/30 Friday!

We're giving away **\$50 Free Slot Play** to lucky slot and table game players every **30 minutes** from **7pm to Midnight!**

THE SHOPS AT ALHAMBRA CASINO
Offering a wide variety of Retail & Dining Outlets, Salon & Spa Services, Souvenirs and more.
Dunkin Donuts | Baskin Robbins | Fusion Piano & Wine Bar
Hungry Piranha | Twist of Flavors | Juan Valdez Café
The Brownstone Ribs & Seafood
Coming Soon: Auntie Anne's Pretzels

Alhambra CASINO AND SHOPS
Open daily 10am to 3am | J.E. Irausquin Blvd #47 | 583.5000 | casinoalhambra.com
Play Responsibly. Visit www.gamblersanonymous.org if you or someone you know has a gambling problem.

Continued

Kenneth and Frans however, decided to further develop their father's legacy and continued with their mother's dream to expand the business. An expansion not in square feet only, but in merchandize as well. A great opportunity presented itself when the Ponson family was able to buy a piece of property across from the airport. In 2007 the Ponson family moved into their brand new and huge building. Ponson's General Store now had an electrical department, as housewares department, a paint department and a hardware department.

After a successful opening and expansion, Kenneth and Frans who inherited their mothers vision, decided General Store was ready for yet another expansion. Together with investors a visibility report was drafted, which resulted in Noord being a very good location for another store. The search for a well located property commenced. Soon after the purchase, with the support of Mr. Tom Barfell and management of Do it Best in the States, the construction of Do it Center commenced. Mrs. Claudia Ponson, Kenneth his wife, was the mastermind behind the interior decoration, making sure the interior of the store was according to the Do it Best guidelines.

Fast forward to today. A Do it Center in Aruba, with more than 50,000 top of the line items for interior as well exterior use, building ma-

terials, STO products and a top of the line grocery store. Perseverance, responsibility, vision and the courage to invest have made Ponson's General Store as successful as it is today.

Super Do It Center Shaba & Groceries

Located in Shaba, Noord. This is the last sibling of the Do It Center family. Here you will be able to find anything you are looking for. The building is divided into several departments from home to hardware to groceries. Everything under one roof. Groceries? Visit the fully stocked supermarket with fresh fruits and vegetables and high class meat selections. Highly known products and brands are here for you to grab. Every week Do It Center Groceries offers you great discount on selected items. Weekly specials are very popular and a perfect chance for you to buy your favorite products at a reduced price.

Need a home makeover? Do not skip the furniture department "Leenbakker". Here, you will find a divine collection of European furniture, worldwide known for their modern and stylish features for your bedroom, bathroom, living room or kitchen. For your garden they have a wide selection of durable furniture specially made for our tropical climate. Take a walk around and find some treasures. Find the perfect accessory for your house, fitted for your personality and style. Modern, elegant, retro industrial, whatever your style is you will definitely find

something for your personal taste. Feeling hungry? Take a break and relax at the 'Deli'. Savor a delicious lunch or a sandwich with a cup of coffee or perhaps a wrap. If you are a sweet tooth you will not be able to just skip the great variety of desserts they have. So tempting!

Do it Center Shaba is open from Mon to Sat from 8AM to 8PM and closed on Sunday

Do It Center Camacuri

Do it Center Camacuri as mentioned before was the first official building of the Do It Center family. After serving the community for many years as a multipurpose facility this was recently transformed to a department specially designated for contractors services only. Open from Mon to Fri from 7.30AM to 6PM. On Sat from 7.30AM- 4PM and closed on Sunday.

Do It Center Savaneta

This location is the baby of the family. Here you will also be able to find everything for your home and garden and building materials to build or renovate your home. Just drive into the 'Lumber Drive-Thru' and the experts will help you with everything you need. Open from Mon to Fri from 8AM to 6PM, SAT, 10AM-4PM and closed on Sunday.

For more information go to www.doit.aw

Do it Center



Open: Daily
From: 5:00pm to 10:00pm
Tel.: 583-2666
Website: www.pinchosaruba.com



Open: Daily for Lunch and Dinner
From: 10:30 am to 10:00 pm
Tel.: 587-2667
Website: www.thewestdeck.com

MOVE IN READY!!

HARBOUR HOUSE
Aruba

THE NEW DOWNTOWN LIVING
With the Most Spectacular View
Don't Miss Out 85% Already Sold!!
Visit us and check it out for yourself

(+297) 594 6395

Weststraat 2 | O'Stad, Aruba | sales@harbourhousearuba.com
WWW.HARBOURHOUSEARUBA.COM

Fe de errata

Oranjestad - In yesterday's edition of Aruba Today we published the honoring of Distinguished Visitors of Aruba with the title "Honoring of Emerald Ambassadors at Divi Phoenix Aruba".

Editors of Aruba Today took note of an error in the headline of our publishing, namely that the honoring took place at Bucuti and Tara resorts as opposed to Divi Phoenix Aruba as the previous

headline stated. Below, you will find published the revised and corrected headline followed by the honoring of our esteemed visitors.

Our sincerest apologies to Bucuti and Tara Resorts, ATA and Dennis and Vickie Carol for the error in the headline made yesterday. We will proceed with more caution in order to only bring forward the best of Aruba Today.



Honoring of Distinguished Visitors at Bucuti and Tara Resorts

EAGLE BEACH - Recently, Aruba Tourism Authority representative Marouska Heyliger had the great pleasure in honoring many loyal Aruba visitors with their distinctive certificates. These certificates are a way to say "Masha Danki" for continuously choosing Aruba as a favorite vacation destination. The titles are as following: 10+ years "Distinguished Visitor", 20+ years "Goodwill Ambassador" and 36+ years "Emerald Ambassador".

The honorees are: **Dennis and Vickie Carol** from Michigan who have been honored as Distinguished Visitors of Aruba. They have been honored as Distinguished Visitors.

The couple loves coming to the island for it's beautiful weather, friendly people and variety of restaurants.

Heyliger together with the representatives of Bucuti and Tara Resorts presented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □

Paul Gielen named Chairman of AHATA for 2022

Oranjestad - Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association (AHATA) has officially inaugurated the new board of directors for the year 2022 during the first general assembly of 2022.

The Board of Directors was chosen by members of AHATA during the general assembly that took place in November of the year 2021. Normal, the installation takes place during the assembly in January, however due to the wave of COVID-19, the meeting was postponed to March. The new board of directors will consist of 13 members; 11 active members and 2 allied members with Paul Gielen, who is General Manager at Renaissance Wind Creek Aruba Resort & Casino named the Chairman.

The board will work alongside President and CEO, Tisa LaSorte, to establish a strat-



egy for the association. AHATA's main goal is to help secure a productive tourism industry that will help sustain the economy of Aruba. □

Exposition Caribbean Ties and History of Noord's Chapel

Noord - MANA (Museo Arqueologico Nacional Aruba), Fundacion 1403 along with Fundacion Kapel di Bethania, are very pleased to bring forward the temporary international exposition of NEXUS 1492 Caribbean Ties closer to the community of Aruba.



This time the temporary exposition mentioned will be in the neighborhood of Noord after it was in San Nicolas and Playa.

Fundacion Kapel di Bethania currently has an exposition in Imeldahof that tells the story of the chapel in Noord. In a jewel of a monument with an enchanting garden, you can enjoy and admire art and religious artifacts, with pictures that tell the story of the times of the nuns in the Imeldahof convent.

In 2019 University of Leiden gifted MANA the exposition Caribbean Ties, which is an international temporary exhibition that is based on results of the project investigation titled NEXUS 1492. In this project, with University of Leiden as the leader, different organizations from different countries in the Caribbean region worked together.

The colonization of the



Caribbean by the Spanish caused a drastic transformation in the cultural practices of the indigenous people. Caribbean Ties shows the role that the indigenous people of the Caribbean played in the global history. The Caribbean history is presented from the perspective of its first inhabitants.

This exposition has been presented in The Netherlands, Aruba, Statia and other Caribbean countries in the same form with vari-

ous topics. The topics are Multiculturality, Migration, Economic and Social exchange and changes in eating habits and beliefs. The educational character of Caribbean Ties has been amplified with 4 short video productions. Especially for schools and groups it is an opportunity that is unique to amplify the knowledge about the history if Aruba and the Caribbean, MANA, Fundacion 1403 and Fundacion Kapel di Bethania invites the community of Aruba abd our visitors who wish to know more about the history of our wonderful Island to visit these 2 expositions which are open on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 8:30 to 3:30pm at Klooster Imeldahof in Noord. We will be open during the upcoming holiday on the 18th of March. To organize a visit you can contact +2975828979. □

Get on top of planned expenses with sinking funds

By **AMANDA BARROSO** of **NerdWallet**

In a given year, you likely have expenses that you know are coming — holiday gifts, the family vacation you take every summer, annual homeowners association fees or maybe membership renewals. But just because these costs are predictable doesn't mean you're always prepared.

If you are pulling from your emergency fund or using a credit card to cover predictable costs, you might consider using one or more "sinking funds." A sinking fund is a savings account dedicated to a particular expense that you fund gradually through regular payments. Sinking funds often have a deadline associated with them, but not always.

You can add sinking funds to your budget for expenses that come at the same time each year or to plan a big purchase you want but don't necessarily need — like a new couch for your living room or that piece of exercise equipment you've been eyeing for months.

Either way, sitting down with your calendar and noting upcoming expenses is a good way to get ahead of predictable costs and prevent unwanted debt or dipping into your emergency fund.

HOW DO SINKING FUNDS COMPARE WITH OTHER



In this June 15, 2018, file photo, cash is fanned out from a wallet in North Andover, Mass.

Associated Press

SAVINGS ACCOUNTS?

A sinking fund is different from other kinds of savings accounts — like an emergency fund or a traditional savings account — in a few ways. An "emergency fund is for true emergencies, and then your sinking fund is for a dedicated, expected planned purchase in the future that we know is coming," says Miko Love, an accredited financial counselor and creator of The Budget Mom, a website with resources to help people create and stick to a budget.

Because they have different purposes, separating sinking and emergency funds is wise.

"I do think it is kind of a

good idea to separate out your emergency fund from a sinking fund just because otherwise it is a little bit tempting to dip into your emergency fund for things that aren't really emergencies," says Madison Block, a marketing communications and programs associate with the nonprofit American Consumer Credit Counseling agency.

Sinking funds also differ from traditional savings accounts because they have a specific goal and target deadline. That helps you track progress on multiple goals while putting all your savings into one large pot can get confusing and make you lose sight of your goals.

THE STRATEGY BEHIND SINKING FUNDS

Most sinking funds have a target date, and with this deadline "comes a strategic way to plan responsibly for that purchase," says Love, who currently has 13 sinking funds. For example, if homeowners association fees are due in May each year, you can start planning ahead to have the cash on hand.

Let's take the HOA example: If annual dues are \$500 and you have six months to save, you need to put about \$83 a month in your sinking fund. Or roughly \$42 per paycheck if paid bi-weekly. Or \$21 a week. As you can see, it's highly customizable.

You can also use windfalls like tax refunds or gift money to boost these accounts and reach your goals faster. Just keep in mind: Put money into sinking funds based on priority and necessity. Required fees or memberships should come before wants, like a new couch or exercise bike.

If you have leftover money in a sinking fund, either keep it there so you're ahead of the game for next year, re-allocate it to the next priority or pad your emergency fund, if needed.

CAN YOU HAVE TOO MANY SINKING FUNDS?

The trick with sinking funds is striking the right balance.

"You can absolutely over-complicate your finances by having too many of these sinking funds," Block says. You might find that having multiple savings buckets to fund with each paycheck feels overwhelming. Setting up autopay might be one way to help streamline things. Some banks offer customers the ability to customize savings buckets within their accounts.

Figuring out your top few priorities and setting up sinking funds is a good start. "(Y)ou probably don't really need a separate sinking fund for every single little expense that you are anticipating," Block says. You can always add more sinking funds if you find this strategy works for you. □

United Airlines to bring back workers idled over vaccination

CHICAGO (AP) — United Airlines will bring back employees who were placed on unpaid leave last year because they refused to get vaccinated against COVID-19.

The airline told employees in a memo Thursday that workers who avoided vaccination by claiming a medical or religious exemption will be allowed back starting March 28.

The company's vice president of human relations, Kirk Limacher, said in the memo that United was tak-

ing the step because it expects coronavirus cases, hospitalizations and deaths to continue to drop over the next few weeks.

New reported cases of COVID-19 in the United States have dropped sharply since mid-January, when the highly contagious omicron variant began to wane.

"Of course, if another variant emerges or the COVID trends suddenly reverse course, we will reevaluate the appropriate safety protocols at that time,"

Limacher said. Last year, CEO Scott Kirby pushed the mandate as a critical safety measure, and United became one of the most visible U.S. corporations to impose a vaccine requirement. The company said that about 97% of its 67,000 U.S. workers got the shots, and only about 200 were terminated.

More than 2,000 workers claimed a medical or religious exemption from vaccination. They were not fired, but were placed on unpaid leave, and several



In this July 2, 2021 file photo, a United Airlines jetliner taxis down a runway for take off from Denver International Airport in Denver.

Associated Press

sued the Chicago-based company.

A United spokeswoman said

Thursday that the company still requires new employees to be vaccinated. □

CROSSWORD

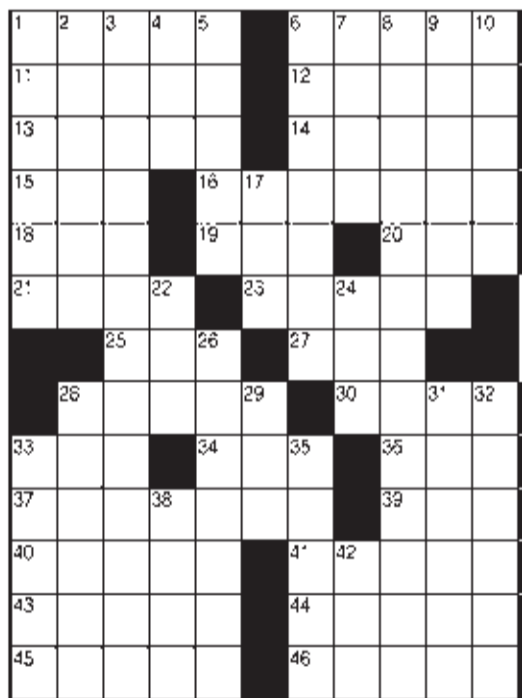
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 41 Supply with a
 - 1 Pink shade grant
 - 6 Granite, once
 - 11 Home
 - 12 Slip
 - 13 Cleaner scent
 - 14 Do refinery work
 - 15 Lyricist Gershwin
 - 16 Serving collections
 - 18 Take in
 - 19 Resistance unit
 - 20 Tab, for one
 - 21 In the past
 - 23 "Grace-land" singer
 - 25 Capp and Capone
 - 27 Knight's title
 - 28 Travel aid
 - 30 Money sources
 - 33 Tough wood
 - 34 Ran into
 - 36 All the rage
 - 37 Mall patron
 - 39 Mine matter
 - 40 From the Arctic



Yesterday's answer

- DOWN**
- 1 Multihued cat
 - 2 King of the fairies
 - 3 Major religion
 - 4 Fuss
 - 5 Slow, in music
 - 6 My friends, to Poirot
 - 7 Prepares for war
 - 8 Major religion
 - 9 Like lava
 - 10 Pretentious
 - 17 Non-committal grunts
 - 22 Building wing
 - 24 Soccer's Hamm
 - 26 Tennis star Pete
 - 28 On the beach
 - 29 Spot
 - 31 Ill-humored
 - 32 Plastered
 - 33 Colorado resort
 - 35 Pay for everyone
 - 38 Prepare for a trip
 - 42 Gun owner's org.



A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-11

CRYPTOQUOTE

C G X M D N D Y N G C R D Z . C G C H D

A Q D U Q X X Z Q C R T Z X L R N A Q D F

J Y H D Y Z A Q D F K G F E F .

— N X L T G Y Z Y N Y J Z

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: TODAY I HAVE GROWN TALLER FROM WALKING WITH THE TREES. - KARLE WILSON BAKER

Changing snowfall makes it harder to fight fire with fire

By BRITTANY PETERSON and MATTHEW BROWN

Associated Press

DECKERS, Colo. (AP) —

Dripping flaming fuel as they go, a line of workers slowly descends a steep, snow-covered hillside above central Colorado's South Platte River, torching piles of woody debris that erupt into flames shooting two stories high.



Fires burn tree debris near the Bridge Crossing picnic grounds in Hatch Gulch on Wednesday, Feb. 23, 2022, near Deckers, Colo. Associated Press

It's winter in the Rocky Mountains, and fresh snow cover allowed the crew of 11 to safely confine the controlled burn.

Such operations are a central piece of the Biden administration's \$50 billion plan to reduce the density of western forests that have been exploding into firestorms as climate change bakes the region.

But the same warming trends that worsen wildfires will also challenge the administration's attempts to guard against them.

Increasingly erratic weather means snow is not always there when needed to safely burn off tall debris piles like those on Colorado's Pike-San Isabel National Forest. And that seriously complicates the job of exhausted firefighters, now forced into service year-round.

Their goal is to cut and burn enough vegetation that the next fires won't be as catastrophic as ones that leveled vast forestland and neighborhoods in Colorado, California, Oregon, Montana and elsewhere.

Western wildfires have become more volatile as climate change dries forests already thick with vegetation from years of intensive fire suppression. And the window for controlled burns is shrinking.

"It's been a little bit harder just because of shorter winters," said David Needham, a U.S. Forest Service ranger who led the Colorado burn operation in late February when the thermometer hovered around zero degrees Fahrenheit (minus 18 Celsius). Surrounding hillsides showed barren scars from past wildfires, including a 2002 blaze that destroyed 133 homes and at the time was the largest in state history.

"On days like this, we capitalize on temperature being in the negatives," Needham said, "Even small snow storms coming in definitely helps us with that." Across the Rockies, piles of slash and trees cleared to reduce fire hazards span some 100,000 acres (40,500 hectares), waiting to be burned once the right amount of snow is on the ground. Sometimes there's too much, making the piles inaccessible. Other times there's not enough snow and prescribed burns get canceled so they don't get out of hand like a previous one that led to fatalities.

An overnight snow in central Colorado meant the crew from the forest ser-

vice and Mile High Youth Corps could burn debris from twice the area they planned. Yet officials said climate change is making it more difficult to find that sweet spot for safe burning. Spring is arriving earlier and snow-covered ground is disappearing two weeks sooner, according to Rutgers University researcher and New Jersey state Climatologist David Robinson, who has examined more than 50 years of snow cover data collected through satellite imagery.

"One thing we know about climate change is it is increasing the variability and the extremes we are experiencing," said Robinson. "Out West, once the season shifts, you get very dry, very quickly and it stays dry for months. So you have a real tight window there." 2020 was the worst wildfire season on record in Colorado, where summers and falls also have been warmer and drier, said Assistant State Climatologist Becky Bolinger. It's "a completely different ball game in terms of wildfires," she said.

For parts of the Rockies, this winter brought too much snow, forcing officials to delay burns. Meanwhile, parts of Wyoming haven't received enough snow to moisten the ground and allow fuel piles to be torched. Even when there is snow, that doesn't mean it will last until the debris stops smoldering, said Brian Keating with the Forest Service's Rocky Mountain region. □

Honey Dolls
 MASSAGE AND ESCORT SERVICE
Beautiful Latin Girls
 Pick-up & Delivery
 Serving Men - Couple - Women - All Genders
 ☎ +297 565-9535
 WWW.PLEASUREINARUBA.COM

Twitter unveils version of site that can bypass Russia block



In this April 26, 2017, file photo is a Twitter app icon on a mobile phone in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

By BARBARA ORTUTAY
AP Technology Writer

Twitter has launched a privacy-protected version of its site to bypass surveillance and censorship after Russia restricted access to its service in the country. Russia has blocked access to Facebook and has limited Twitter in an attempt to try to restrict the flow of information about its war in Ukraine. Both companies have said they are working on restoring access to people inside Russia even as they restrict the country's state media from their services.

Known as an "onion" service, users can access this version of Twitter if they download the Tor browser, which allows people to access sites on what is also re-

ferred to as the "dark web." Instead of .com, onion sites have a .onion suffix. Regular websites, including Twitter.com, are also accessible on Tor, but the .onion versions are made specifically for Tor and prevent the site from being spoofed by malicious actors. While the term "dark web" connotes illegal sites such as the now-defunct Silk Road drug market, it is also often used by people seeking to remain anonymous for their safety and also to access sites censored by repressive governments. Facebook and other sites such as the BBC also have versions accessible on Tor. Twitter's version has been in the works for some time, since before the Russian invasion, the company con-

firmed Wednesday. Software engineer and internet security expert Alec Muffett, who has worked with other companies to set up onion sites, announced Twitter's new service on his own Twitter account. "This is possibly the most important and long-awaited tweet that I've ever composed," he wrote on Tuesday. □

ARUBA TODAY
BONDIA

How to reach us!

Downtown



Marriott Aruba Surf Club PLATINUM SEASON
 2 Bed Oceanfront \$25,000
 2 Bed Oceanside \$18,500
 2 Bed Ocean view \$17,500
 2 Bed Garden view \$15,500
 3 Bed Ocean view \$28,000
 WK 51 Garden view \$42,500
 WK 52 Oceanside \$55,000
 WK 7 and 14 - all views
GOLD SEASON
 2 Bed Oceanfront \$14,000
 2 Bed Oceanside \$11,000
 2 Bed Ocean view \$8,000
 2 Bed Garden view \$6,000
 3 Bed Ocean view \$13,000

Marriott Aruba Ocean Club PLATINUM SEASON
 2 Bed Oceanfront \$31,000
 2 Bed Ocean view \$18,500
 1 Bed ocean front \$17,500
 1 Bed ocean View \$12,000
GOLD SEASON
 2 Bed Oceanfront \$14,000
 2 Bed Ocean view \$9,500
 1 Bed oceanfront \$9,000
 1 Bed ocean View \$6,500

** Destination Points \$8.00 per point

La Cabana Beach Resort
 1 Bed wk 51 \$6,500

Divi Aruba Phoenix
 1 bed wk 20 unit 633 \$11,000
 2 bed wk 11 unit 101 ground floor
 expires 2037 \$16,500
 Other weeks are also available.

We are the #1 Rental Timeshare agent for Aruba!

We also RENT Aruba weeks for owners, Contact us to BUY, SELL or RENT any timeshare property.

Contact:
 michelle@conciergerealty.com
888-888-2204 Ext 104
Website:
 www.conciergerealty.com
Broker: Michelle Donato
 www.facebook.com/groups/MarriottArubaSurf/
 www.facebook.com/groups/MarriottArubaOcean

Classifieds

Land For Sale San Barbola
 Property 349 mt2
 Price US\$70.000
 Call 594 4982 whspp only
 leilavalderrama@hotmail.com
 215214

For Sale by Owner Eagle Aruba Resort & Casino
 Weeks 2,3,4
 Three Bedroom Suite
 Unit #3508
 \$14,950.00 per wk
 Contact
 sales.aruba@hotmail.com
 215098

For Sale by Owner Caribbean Palm Village Resort
 Wk 50-2BR/28th, \$1,900
 Wks 51852-/2BR/28th, \$2,900
 Wks 51&52/1BR/2Bth, \$1,900
 Wk 52-1BR/2Bth, \$2,500
 Wk 11-2BR/2Bth, \$1,900
 Wk 12-1 BR/2Bth, \$1,200
 Wk 13-2 BR/2Bth, \$1,300
 Contact:
 sales.aruba@hotmail.com
 215061



Editor
 Caribbean Speed Printers N.V.
 Aruba Bank N.V. Acc. #332668
 Caribbean Mercantile Bank N.V.
 Acc. #23951903
 RBC Royal Bank Acc. #1330772

Assistant Director
 Xiomara Arends

Editors
 Pilar Flores
 Liza Koolman (Management assistant)

Sales
 Richard Brooks
 Liza Koolman
 Sulaika Croes

Classifieds
 classified@cspnv.com

Distribution and Collection
 accounting@bondia.com

Social / Website
 Juan Luis Pinto
Columnists
 Anthony Croes

Weststraat 22
 T: 582-7800
 E: news@arubatoday.com
 W: www.arubatoday.com
 @arubatoday

HEALTH

DOCTOR ON DUTY
Oranjestad
 Hospital 7:00 pm / 10:00pm
 Tel. 527 4000
San Nicolas
 Imsan 24 hours
 Tel.524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY
Oranjestad:
 Botica Trupial Tel. 583 8560
San Nicolas:
 Aloe Tel. 584 4606

OTHER
 Dental Clinic 587 9850
 Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
 Urgent Care 586 0448
 Walk-In Doctor's Clinic
 +297 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
Sta. Cruz	527 2900
San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

Taxi Tas	587 5900
Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

TRAVEL INFO

Aruba Airport	524 2424
American Airlines	582 2700
Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

AID FOUNDATIONS

FAVI- Visually Impaired	Tel. 582 5051
Alcoholics Anonymous	Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous	Tel. 583 8989
Fundacion Contra Violencia Relacional	Tel. 583 5400
Centre for Diabetes	Tel. 524 8888
Child Abuse Prevention	Tel. 582 4433
Quota Club	Tel. 525 2672

Like us on Facebook

facebook.com/arubatoday/

Made-in-Japan manga goes global with Webtoon, Deadpool

By YURI KAGEYAMA

Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Deadpool, meet All Might.

Perhaps nothing highlights how the world of manga, the comics and cartoons originating in Japan, has gone global better than that coming together of superheroes, American and Japanese.

In “Deadpool: Samurai,” Marvel’s Deadpool gets help in his battle against evil from All Might, the muscular hero in “My Hero Academia,” a hit Japanese manga that’s sold 65 million copies worldwide.

“Deadpool: Samurai,” published in Japanese last year, came out in English translation this month. The Japa-

nese “Deadpool: Samurai” was the best-selling Marvel comic last year, surpassing more than 1 million views online. It marks the first partnership between Marvel and Japanese comics publisher Shonen Jump.

Sanshiro Kasama, the author of “Deadpool: Samurai,” said he was thrilled to take on the job because he has always loved Marvel heroes and wanted more Japanese people to love Deadpool.

“I said, yes, yes, yes, yes! I really want to do it. It’s unbelievable the guy who always wanted to create a manga like Deadpool really gets to do Deadpool. I was so excited,” he told The Associated Press.



The image is from Sanshiro Kasama’s “Deadpool: Samurai,” published in Japanese in 2021, and in English in February 2022.

Associated Press

One challenge was that Marvel was protective of its characters and would often insist what he had Deadpool doing was out of character. In one scene, where he had Deadpool shooting someone, a gun had to be changed to a paint gun, said Kasama.

“Deadpool: Samurai” features drawings by Hikaru Uesugi, Kasama’s collaborator, but the scenes with All Might had drawings by its original manga artist Kohei Horikoshi. “Deadpool: Samurai” is the first collaboration between Marvel and U.S. manga publisher and anime distributor VIZ Media.

Manga has quickly become the top adult fiction category in the U.S. Sales in the graphic novel category — which includes manga and is exemplified by “My Hero Academia” — jumped 160% in 2021 on-year, growing 15 times faster than the total adult book market, according to The NPD Group, which tracks such trends.

Japan still makes up for the world’s biggest manga market at 45% in 2020, but the rest of the global market combined is quickly catching up, according to Grand View Research, a researcher and consultant based in San Francisco. The global manga market, valued at \$23.5 billion in 2020, is expected to balloon to \$48 billion in 2028, it said.

Julia Mechler, creator of the manga “Hymn of the Teada,” found that an American publisher was more interested in her work, which stars a woman from Okinawa, than were Japanese publishers, who saw it as niche and political.

Mechler wants her works to give a voice to Okinawa, a southwestern Japanese island where a gruesome land battle was fought in the closing years of World War II.

“I thought the beauty of Okinawa is that they really value peace,” said Mechler, whose mother is Okinawan and her father American.

“I was educated that peace is the most important thing in the world. Peace and life. And that sounds like a cliché, but, looking at the world, that’s actually really difficult to achieve.”

Mechler believes the boundaries between Japanese manga and works by non-Japanese are blurring, with the world of manga increasingly going global.

Japanese animation, known as anime, is popular on Netflix. Shows like “Demon Slayer” and “Attack on Titan” were first published as manga. Netflix is promising more anime this year, as are other streaming services like Hulu and Disney+.

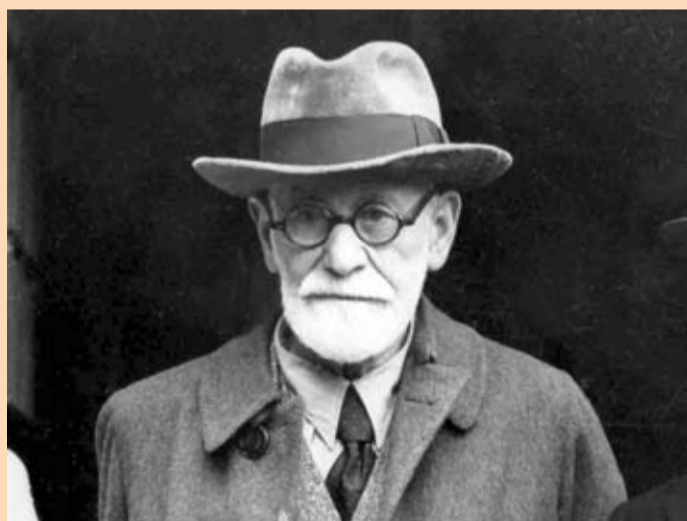
Manga is also behind hit Netflix series that star human actors like “Fishbowl Wives,” which focuses on marital infidelity in a middle-class Tokyo neighborhood. Such shows are drawing not only Japanese but also American and other global viewers.

Another hit Netflix show, “All of Us Are Dead,” in which zombies overrun a high school, is based on a Webtoon, a form of manga that started in South Korea. Although manga has long been available online through Kindle, Apple Books, Google Play and other platforms, Webtoon caters its products for cellphone reading by rearranging the boxes to line up vertically, allowing readers to scroll from panel to panel with a flip of the finger.

When manga is read on paper pages, the story moves across from one box image to the other. Some Japanese manga fans still prefer reading the old way, even online, but newcomers appear to be rapidly adapting to enjoying manga Webtoon-style.

Webtoon Worldwide Service, which includes Naver Webtoon in South Korea, founded in 2004; Line Manga in Japan; and services in the U.S., Europe and other nations, recently hit 82 million users a month. Growth is especially strong in the U.S. □

Aciman, Toibin among contributors to book on Sigmund Freud



Jewish psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud appears at his Hampstead home in London on June 6, 1938.

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Andre Aciman, Colm Toibin and Rick Moody are among the authors contributing to an essay collection on the legacy of Sigmund Freud. “On the Couch: Writers Analyze Sigmund Freud,” conceived and edited by the literary agent Andrew Blauer, is scheduled for release in 2023 by Princeton University Press.

“Freud is a complicated and controversial figure, and this anthology will present a wealth of diverse and engaging perspectives on his legacy,” Princeton University Press Executive Editor Anne Savarese said in a statement Thursday.

Other writers featured in the book include Jennifer Finney Boylan, Gerald Early, Siri Hustvedt and Esther Freud, great-granddaughter of Sigmund Freud. Blauer previously edited “Now Comes Good Sailing: On Henry David Thoreau and the Meaning of Life,” which included essays by Joyce Carol Oates, Lauren Groff and John McPhee. □

Unvaccinated Djokovic says he is out of Indian Wells, Miami

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
AP Tennis Writer

Novak Djokovic said that he will not be able to compete at the hard-court tennis tournaments in Indian Wells, California, or Miami because he is unvaccinated and can't travel to the United States.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion tweeted Wednesday that the Centers for Disease Control "confirmed the regulations won't be changing so I won't be able to play in the U.S."

Djokovic, who recently dropped to No. 2 in the ATP rankings, has played in only one tournament so far in 2022 because he has not received any shots to protect against COVID-19. He was deported from Australia in January and was not allowed to try to defend his title at Melbourne Park.

Rafael Nadal wound up winning the Australian Open for his 21st major trophy, breaking a tie with Djokovic and Roger Federer for the most claimed by a man in the history of tennis.

Djokovic is a 34-year-old from Serbia who said in April 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic raged, that he was opposed to needing to be vaccinated to travel. In June of that year,



Serbia's Novak Djokovic returns the ball to Italy's Lorenzo Musetti during a match of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championship in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, Feb. 21, 2022.

Associated Press

with professional tennis on hiatus, he organized a series of exhibition matches in Serbia and Croatia with no rules requiring social distancing or masking — a tour that was called off after some players, including Djokovic, got COVID-19.

His name was put in the draw for the BNP Paribas Open in California on Tuesday, even though his status was up in the air because the U.S. has been requiring foreign visitors to be vaccinated to enter the country. In addition, the tournament had previously announced

that everyone on-site at Indian Wells would need to be fully inoculated.

"While I was automatically listed in the @BNPPARIBASOPEN and @MiamiOpen draw," Djokovic wrote Wednesday, "I knew it would be unlikely I'd be able to travel."

Indian Wells is under way this week; the Miami Open starts on March 21.

"We understood from the beginning that Novak's participation at the Miami Open was determinant on his entry into the United States, which we knew

would be a long shot," said James Blake, the tournament director in Miami. "We have an incredibly deep and talented player field, and look forward to hosting a great event."

Chris Widmaier, a spokesman for the U.S. Tennis Association, which runs the U.S. Open, said the organization would have no comment other than to note that the event follows government guidelines. The American Grand Slam tournament is scheduled to begin on Aug. 29.

It has been a turbulent

start to 2022 for Djokovic, who went through detention and a court case during an 11-day saga in Australia before he was sent home. During the legal back-and-forth, Djokovic said he wasn't vaccinated and thought he should get a medical exemption to rules requiring the shots because, he said, he tested positive for COVID-19 again in December. He also said he attended an in-person interview with a reporter despite having that result. In February, Djokovic said in an interview that he would not get vaccinated, even if he needs to be in order to participate in events such as the French Open or Wimbledon.

On the last day of last month, Djokovic dropped out of the No. 1 ranking for the first time in two years, sliding to No. 2 behind Daniil Medvedev. Djokovic's 361 total weeks atop the ATP are a record, as are his seven times finishing a season at No. 1.

And on March 1, Djokovic announced that he and coach Marian Vajda were splitting up after 15 years together.

In his lone tournament of the year, Djokovic lost to Jiri Vesely in the quarterfinals of the Dubai Championships. □

MLS leverages \$25 million loan to promote economic justice

By **ANNE M. PETERSON**
AP Sports Writer

Major League Soccer will leverage a \$25 million loan from a coalition of Black-owned banks in an effort to promote economic equity and justice. The partnership announced Thursday with the nonprofit National Black Bank Foundation aims to grow the banks' capital through interest earned and fees — which in turn creates the capacity for new lines of credit for loans in communities of color.

MLS says it is the first time a major sports league in the United States has entered into a major transac-

tion with exclusively Black-owned banks.

Ashley Bell, NBBF founder and general counsel, said the result will be access to capital for prospective home owners, businesses and faith-based organizations. "So when you talk about why this matters, it matters because this gives a chance for a sense of pride in our community, to see that our Black banks from across the country are able to do a deal with a world-class organization with the most diverse fan base in the world, to be able to say that we can do exactly what Chase, Bank of America or any other

bank can do, by joining together," Bell said. "This is us working together proving that we're good enough, we're strong enough to get a deal done just as quickly as anybody else and we did that." The loan is part of the league's endeavors to combat racism and advocate for social justice, announced in October 2020. The league is working with the MLS group Black Players for Change.

Sola Winley, MLS executive vice president and head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, said the financing would be used for strategic investments and priorities but has not been



Toronto FC's fans set off blue-and-yellow flares and hold up colored cards to show their support for Ukraine during the first half of an MLS soccer match against the New York Red Bulls, in Toronto, Saturday, March 5, 2022.

Associated Press

earmarked. Black Players for Change was founded by Justin Morrow in 2020 in response to the death of George Floyd. The group made a powerful statement of unity at the MLS is Back Tournament that year

during which the players stood silent with fists raised for more than 8 minutes — signifying the length of time police officer Derek Chauvin had his knee on Floyd's neck before he died. □

MLB players vote to end lockout, salvaging 162-game season

By **RONALD BLUM**
AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Players have voted to accept Major League Baseball's latest offer for a new labor deal, paving the way to end a 99-day lockout and salvage a 162-game regular season that would begin April 7.

The union's executive board approved the agreement in a 26-12 vote Thursday, pending ratification by all players, a person familiar with the balloting said, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because no announcement was authorized. MLB sent the players an offer Thursday and gave them until 3 p.m. to accept in order to play a full season. The union announced the player vote around 3:25 p.m. Owners planned to hold a ratification vote at 6 p.m.

"The deal pushes the game forward," Yankees pitcher Gerrit Cole, a member of the union's executive subcommittee, said in a telephone interview with The Associated Press. "It addresses a lot of the things that the players in the game should be focused on: the competitive integrity aspect of it."

The agreement will allow training camps to open this



San Diego Padres left fielder Allen Cordoba passes a logo for Play Ball, an initiative from Major League Baseball and USA Baseball, during the fifth inning of a baseball game against the Colorado Rockies on June 3, 2017, in San Diego.

week in Florida and Arizona, more than three weeks after they were scheduled to on Feb. 16. Fans can start making plans to be at Fenway Park, Dodger Stadium and Camden Yards next month. Opening day is being planned a little more than a week behind the original date on March 31. The deal also will set off a rapid-fire round of free agency. Carlos Correa, Freddie Freeman and Kris Bryant are among 138 big leaguers still without a team, including some who might benefit from the adoption of a universal designated hitter. The sport's new collective

bargaining agreement also expands the playoffs to 12 teams and introduces incentives to limit so-called "tanking." The minimum salary will rise from \$570,500 to about \$700,000, and the luxury tax threshold will increase from \$210 million to \$230 million this year, a slight loosening for the biggest spenders such as the Yankees, Mets, Dodgers and Red Sox. A new bonus pool was established for players not yet eligible for arbitration, a way to boost salaries for young stars. Commissioner Rob Manfred had set a Tuesday deadline for a deal that would preserve a 162-

game schedule along with full pay and service time required for players to reach free agency. Talks spilled past the deadline and Manfred announced more cancellations Wednesday, increasing the total to 184 of the 2,230 games.

After yet another snag, this time over management's desire for an international amateur draft, the deal came together Thursday afternoon and capped nearly a year of talks that saw pitchers Max Scherzer and Andrew Miller take prominent roles as union spokesmen.

Players had fumed for years about the deal that

expired Dec. 1, which saw payrolls decline 4% in 2021 compared to the last full season, back to their 2015 level. The union had an ambitious negotiating stance in talks that began last spring, asking for free-agency rights to increase with an age-based backstop and for an expansion of salary arbitration to its level from 1974-86.

In the late stages, the level and rates of the luxury tax, designed as a break on spending, became the key to a deal. Players think that too low of a threshold and too high of a rate acts tantamount to a salary cap, which the union fought off with a 7 1/2-month strike in 1994-95.

The agreement came after three days of shuttle negotiations between the MLB offices in midtown Manhattan and the players' association headquarters, three blocks away.

Despite hundreds of hours of threats and counter-threats, the sides are set to avoid regular-season games being canceled by labor conflict for the first time since the 1994-95 strike. Games originally announced as canceled by Manfred were changed to postponed, and MLB will modify the original schedule. □



Brent Sass heads down the Yukon River between Ruby and Galena, Alaska, on March 13, 2020, during the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

Associated Press

By **MARK THIESSEN**
Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — The top five mushers in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race appear to be taking an extended break in the ghost town of Cripple,

Alaska. All mushers in the nearly 1,000-mile (1,609-kilometer) race across Alaska must take three mandatory rest periods: a 24-hour layover at any checkpoint, an eight-hour layover some-

Iditarod mushers taking break at race's halfway point

where along the Yukon River and another eight-hour layover at White Mountain, which is 77 miles (124 kilometers) from the finish line. Five mushers and their dog teams arrived Wednesday, and none had left as of Thursday morning.

Brent Sass was the first musher to reach Cripple Wednesday afternoon, winning \$3,000 in gold nuggets for the feat.

He was followed into Cripple about three hours later by defending champion Dallas Seavey, who is trying to win his sixth championship. That would be the most ever by a musher in the world's most famous

sled dog race.

When Seavey arrived in Cripple, he asked race officials where long-term parking was, as he declared he was taking his 24-hour layover there, according to video posted on the Iditarod website.

Other mushers who arrived in Cripple Wednesday night were Hugh Neff, Ryan Redington and Mitch Seavey, a three-time champion and Dallas Seavey's father.

Eleven other mushers were en route to Cripple from the previous checkpoint of Ophir, where they all had completed their 24-hour layover.

The race started for 49

mushers Sunday in Willow, just north of Anchorage.

Late Wednesday evening, musher Anja Radano of Talkeetna withdrew from the race, saying the decision was in the best interest of her dog team. She scratched at the Nikolai checkpoint, and she had 12 dogs in harness.

The route for the remaining mushers will take them over two mountain ranges, the frozen Yukon River, along Alaska's windswept western coast and onto the treacherous Bering Sea ice to the finish line in Nome.

The winner is expected under the burlled arch finish line sometime next week. □